

RED TOP SALVAGE II
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
South River Resource Area
EA# OR105-98-23
(amends OR105-97-07)

Date Prepared: September 10, 1998

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Documentation

The South River Resource Area, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, has completed the environmental analysis on the Red Top Salvage II Harvest Plan located in T. 28 S., R. 2 W., Sections 32 and 33; and T. 29 S., R. 2 W., Sections 4 and 9. The project area is within the Matrix where most timber harvest and other silvicultural activities would be conducted according to the Standards and Guidelines (S & G) for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Record of Decision (ROD), April 13, 1994. This sale was offered on December 23, 1997 with a current status of sold and awarded, but under suspension.

Three alternatives were analyzed, including the proposed action (Alternative 1), the revised action (Alternative 2), and the "no action" (Alternative 3). The action alternatives 1 and 2 are described in the Environmental Assessment (EA, pp. 3-5). The action alternatives have the following common features: Salvage will be done through a combination of tractor and uphill cable yarding; any necessary spur roads will be of a temporary nature; operations are restricted to the dry season; yarding corridors will be a maximum of 20 feet in width and a minimum of 200 feet apart where practical; skid trails will be predesignated at a minimum spacing of 200 feet and will be tilled in the same operating season in which they are used; snags requiring falling for safety reasons will be left on site as coarse woody debris; salvage in Riparian Reserves will not be allowed within a 90 foot buffer placed on all streams and drainages; one quarter to one third of all blowdown outside the 90 foot "No Touch" buffers will be retained as coarse woody debris. The action alternatives differ as follows: Alternative 1 proposes to thin 151 acres and salvage 366 acres; Alternative 2 drops the thinning and salvages 132 acres.

The project is not within the proximity of wetlands, park lands, prime farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers. No unique characteristics were identified or would be impacted (CEQ Regulations, section 1508.27(b)(3)).

There were no Native American religious concerns identified through scoping. The cultural resources in the project area were identified as not significant by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), except for one site, where special yarding measures will be applied to minimize ground disturbance. There would be no adverse impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (CEQ Regulations, section 1508.27(b)(8)).

The project area overlaps the provincial home range of six northern spotted owl (NSO) sites. One of these sites is below the "incidental take" threshold. Salvage is not expected to reduce suitable habitat with the exception of the removal of approximately two acres for temporary roads, yarding corridors and guyline

trees. The overall impact is considered a "may affect-likely to adversely affect" determination. The Oregon Coast coho salmon and Umpqua River cutthroat trout are found in the watersheds and the proposed project is a "may affect, likely to adversely affect" for these species. Consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been completed, and a Biological Opinion received. Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is pending. Terms and Conditions stated in the Biological Opinions of each agency, would be implemented in order to minimize take, and impacts would be within the range analyzed by the ROD/RMP. There would be no significant adverse impacts to these special status species (CEQ, section 1508.27(b)(9)).

Field surveys for Special Status Plant populations that have the potential to occur in the project area were conducted during the blooming season. No special status plant species requiring protection were identified in the project area, so there would be no significant impacts to any special status plant and the action does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law (CEQ, section 1508.27(b)(10)).

Of the ten points under section 1508.27(b), the following will not be discussed further in this document, because there are no: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and no precedents for future actions with significant effects.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA (pp. 5-8), I have determined that neither Alternative 1 or 2 will have significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and an environmental impact statement is not required. The project is in conformance with the Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP) for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995. An in-depth analysis of project consistency with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy is included in Appendix C of the EA. The Aquatic Conservation Strategy will be met (ROD/RMP, p. 19). The Best Management Practices (BMP's) listed in Appendix D of the ROD/RMP (p.129-143) were used to develop project design features to mitigate impacts.

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize the salvage of approximately 2,497 CCF (1,492 MBF) of timber, from approximately 132 acres in T. 28 S., R. 2 W., Sections 32 and 33; and T. 29 S., R. 2 W., Sections 4 and 9. The harvest is located in the General Forest Management Area (GFMA), Connectivity/Diversity Block and Riparian Reserve land use allocations (Alternative 2). The Purchaser will be allowed to resume operations authorized under contract upon receipt of a concurring Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

All drainages and streams in the project area will have a 90 foot "No Touch" buffer, in which no salvage will be allowed. One fourth to one third of the blowdown outside of these buffers, in both the Riparian Reserves and Matrix uplands, will be left as coarse woody debris. Only snags identified as a safety hazard operations will be felled, and these will remain on site as coarse woody debris.

Two temporary spur roads with a combined length of 1,536 feet will be constructed. These roads will be constructed within a maximum clearing limit of 30 feet, used and decommissioned in the same operating season. Approximately 3,600 feet of road renovation will be accomplished in conjunction with this project.

Rationale for Decision:

The decision is based on the following objectives: the harvest applies the ecosystem management approach as outlined in the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (ROD) and meets the objectives for Matrix lands as stated in the Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP, p. 33); harvest within Riparian Reserves is consistent with forest health concerns and recommendations expressed in watershed analysis regarding the potential for insect infestation (Deadman/Dompier Watershed Analysis, Executive Summary). The sale will contribute to the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) (ROD/RMP, p. 60) for the resource area as originally proposed. The “no action” alternative would not meet the above objectives.

The thinning was dropped from the proposed action based on updated stand exams which indicated insufficient volume to economically justify the thinning. These stands were heavily damaged but the residual density would not benefit from treatment at this time. Blowdown throughout mature stands was often scattered or inaccessible, accounting for the reduced scope of salvage.

Mitigation has been formulated into the contract stipulations and was applied during layout and implementation. These project design features may be found in a description of the proposed actions on pages 3-5 of the Environmental Assessment. Application of these mitigation, and the maintenance of a 90 foot “No Touch” buffer on Riparian Reserves will minimize impacts to hydrologic and associated systems, including the fisheries resource. The 90 foot buffer will provide adequate protection to streams and draws as a source of shade and a filtering system for sediment transported overland by the surface flow of water. Retention of one quarter to one third of all blowdown outside of the 90 foot buffer will provide for present and future needs for coarse woody debris. This action will not prevent the attainment of the objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ROD, p. C-32)

All snags will be left standing, except where they would constitute a safety hazard. Snags that require felling will be left on site as coarse woody debris.

The two spur roads to be constructed will be temporary and will be decommissioned in the same operating season in which they are built and used. One spur is approximately 300 feet in length and will allow the operator to establish a landing off the main road. The other spur utilizes 300 feet of an existing Forest Service road, then follows a broad ridge an additional 1,235 feet to a landing. Road No. 28-3-32.3 will be renovated and upgraded to meet Best Management Practices outlined in Appendix D of the RMP. A four inch lift of rock will be used to surface the road and reduce sedimentation from the road surface.

A Biological Opinion (BO) dated January 23, 1997 was received from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Consultation under Section 7(a)(4) of the Endangered Species Act has not been completed with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the Umpqua River cutthroat trout and Oregon Coast coho salmon. The contract suspension will not be lifted until a final biological opinion or letter of concurrence, which includes a non-jeopardy determination, has been received. The sale was designed to follow the guidance of the Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan, and to incorporate mitigations identified in the consultations on previously listed salmonids, as appropriate. Therefore, it is our expectation that the biological opinion will not make a jeopardy determination nor prescribe any reasonable and prudent measures or terms and conditions that are not already part of the sale design and mitigation. If additional reasonable and prudent alternative measures or terms and conditions are prescribed which would require alteration in the terms of the sale contract, the BLM retains the discretion to adjust the sale design accordingly.

No issues were identified by other agencies, the public or Native Americans during the scoping process. Comments were received from members of the public and were considered during the development of this decision. None of the comments provided new information or issues which have not been addressed in the EA or EIS. Several comments received, warrant clarification:

1. All new road construction is temporary and is located on broad, stable ridges.
2. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concurred with the project.
3. Riparian Reserve widths have not been reduced. Widths were based on watershed analysis and forest inventory data, using methods approved by the Regional Ecosystem Office (REO).

Compliance and Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, 190, 191, and 195-198).

Protest and Appeals Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR Subpart 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice in the News Review.

Steve Niles
Area Manager
South River Resource Area

Date